DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 095 565 CS 201 524

AUTHOR McCall, Patricia Ellen
TITLE The Current Status of Newspaperwomen in Wisconsin.
PUB DATE Aug 74
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (57th, San Diego, California, August 18-21, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Employee Attitudes; *Employment Practices; Females; *Journalism; Media Research; *Newspapers; News Reporting; Occupational Aspiration; *Sex Discrimination; State Surveys; *Working Women
IDENTIFIERS *Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on three questions: Who are the professional women on newspaper staffs? How do they feel about their jobs? What are their job expectations? Questionnaires were sent to each of Wisconsin's 35 daily newspaper editors (all men), a brief form for the editor and a longer form for each woman on his news-editorial staff. Tabulation of the results indicates that a typical newspaperwoman is a full-time reporter, a college graduate with a major in journalism, 28 years old, and about as likely to be single as married. She has five years experience in newspaper work, is making $180 a week, and plans to have or has had a long career in journalism. These women perceive their jobs as no different in performance than those of men, and most of their editors agree. Most women are satisfied with their jobs but have felt discrimination and expect opposition from their male co-workers. They feel their jobs provide poor opportunities to advance and only fair to poor use of their abilities. Their occupational expectations are not high; few seek to be managing editors, publishers, or editors-in-chief. And they feel their chances of getting into management positions are less compared to their male co-workers. Several ways for gaining equality in the newsroom are suggested. (TO)

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ED 095565

THE CURRENT STATUS OF NEWSPAPERWOMEN IN WISCONSIN

Patricia Ellen McCall

Mass Communications Research Center
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Paper for Plenary Session, Association for Education in Journalism, at the Annual Convention of AEJ, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, August 19, 1974

CS 201 524

American women face a society where men still dominate most political, lucrative and powerful institutions. Recently, increased attention has been directed toward the quality of treatment of the sexes. The government, the courts, employers in many professional fields and women themselves are considering and acting on issues of equality. The Equal Rights amendment is under consideration by the states; the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission receives more than 2,000 sex discrimination charges each year[1]; employers are studying and implementing affirmative action programs for minorities and women.

Journalism is a profession that is not strictly divided into stereotypic male and female occupational roles. There is the prototype trenchcoated, crime-hunting reporter (male) and the proverbial glamorous society editor (female) but on the whole, newspaper journalism is not a field from which women have been notably excluded. The 1970 U.S. Census reported that there were still twice as many men as women in the profession of journalism.

The status of newspaperwomen in the field remains at question. There is reason to believe that women working on newspapers, as in many other occupations, have not achieved equality with men. The overwhelming majority of Pulitzer prizes in reporting have gone to male journalists. Prominent editors and reporters are nearly all men. Traditionally, women journalists have worked in separate departments for fashion, foods, and other "soft" news. For women who want to concentrate on hard news, the "women's pages" may be a hindrance. It seems, even now, some news is too "hard" for women and some, too "soft" for men.

Recently, women journalists have begun to examine their own situation: The Media Report to Women reported a national conference this spring on media and women at which the "scarcity of women at decision-making levels" was discussed, and another conference, on media sexism, was scheduled for late 1974.[2]

Few studies have been made of the newspaperwoman's situation. Surveying newspaperwomen belonging to the professional women journalists' organization Theta Sigma Phi, Lublin found that half of the respondents believed they held less than an equal chance of promotion than men. Less than one-tenth of the jobs held by women were classified as executive, half of these were women's page editors; others were assistant city editor and Sunday magazine editors, she reported.[3] A 1969 survey of salaries of newspaperwomen conducted by the Ohio Newspaper Women's Association showed that over 80% of the women polled felt that they did not have equality with men in salary and placement.[4] Another study of sex discrimination in the newspaper field showed that 58% of a sample of 50 newspaperwomen felt that they did not have equal opportunities with men in the newsroom, a frequent complaint being that they got more than their share of "trivia" to report.[5]

Some studies have been done by academicians in the area of broadcast news. In a national survey of Radio-Television News Directors Association newsrooms, Stone reported that only about half of the TV and joint TV-radio news staffs included even one full time woman.[6] In a national survey of women in broadcast news, in a paper presented at this convention, Nash et al. found that only 13% of women respondents were in managerial positions, and over two-thirds said they had been discriminated against; some of the areas mentioned were salaries, assignments, and promotion. About three-fourths felt they had less chance than did men of advancing in broadcasting.[7]

There has been no investigation of the newspaper journalist's situation equivalent to these studies of broadcast journalism. Those concerned with the execution of affirmative action programs need to know about the women in the field. What have been the effects of the social movements for women? Do younger women have higher expectations for a challenging and rewarding career? Are managerial positions in the newsroom staffed and controlled by men? If women are held back, how much is due to their own attitudes and aspirations?

METHOD

All of Wisconsin's 35 daily newspaper editors and the women on their news-editorial staffs were surveyed in the spring of 1974. The newspapers ranged in circulation size from 5,000 to 350,000. Twenty-five newspapers had a circulation of 5,000 to 35,000; eight papers had a circulation of over 35,000 to 100,000; two papers had a circulation over 100,000.[8]

From telephone conversations with the editors (all males) it was established that there were 195 women working on news or women's page staffs. (Each paper had at least one woman staffer.) The distinction between news and "women's" staff was not always clear. Many newspapers made no distinction, some made a major one. But respondents were coded as being on the "woman's" page only if their job title or description of duties specifically indicated that they worked on a special, "soft" news section.

The editors were sent a brief questionnaire and were requested to distribute a longer questionnaire to the women on the news staff. Fifty-five per cent of the women (N=107) returned the questionnaires; 63% of the editors (N=22) returned their questionnaires. The newswomen were asked basic demographic information; about areas in which they felt favored or discriminated against; about differences which they thought existed between them and the men on their staffs in terms of job performance, chances of being hired, fired or promoted. They were also asked about future plans and desired job improvements.

The editors were asked about any differences in their treatment of men and women on their news staffs, and about differences they saw in the job performance of men and women on their staffs.

Respondents were not individually identified.

RESULTS

Who Are Working Newspaperwomen?

Almost all (94%) respondents were working full time, most as staff reporters. Fifty-one per cent of the women were reporters on the news staff, 14% were reporters

on a woman's or "soft" news staff. Few held high level jobs on the staffs: editors on the woman's section, 20%; copy editors, 9%; editors on the news staff, 4%; others, 2%. None were managing editors or editors-in-chief. The highest positions claimed on the news staff were state editor and assistant city editor.

Most women (74%) were college graduates, and half of the women who attended college majored in journalism. Despite this schooling, three-fourths of all the women said they received most of their training on the job. Women on large papers had more education than those on small papers.

The median age was 28. Age and education were negatively related in this sample (Pearson r=-.31).

About as many women were married (43%) as single (45%), and 21% of the women had children at home. About a third of the women (35%) had some non-media experience before their current job, more than half of the women (52%) had some previous media experience. Five years on the present staff and five years in newspaper work were typical (medians).

Median salary was $180 per week. Larger papers paid more on the whole, and women with more education earned more.

The duties of women staffers is reported in Table 1. Most well-liked duties were general reporting and features. Other duties which were liked by the majority of women performing them were wire desk, columnist and administrative-supervisory. Least liked were obits, rewrites and clerical work. Women were given the traditional arts and education beats more often than other beats. Those under "other" beats were women with special niches that almost all (94%) particularly enjoyed.

What Are Their Perceptions About Their Jobs?

Women rated four types of job rewards separately for how important each was in a job and for how well their present job provided the reward. The importance of three rewards were rated consistently by women in all positions on the staff and regardless of age: almost all the women (94%) reported that using their abilities was very important to them; most (57%) considered it very important that their job be valuable to society; salary was rated as very important by 34% of the women.

Younger women (25 and under) rated opportunities to advance more important than did older women; overall, 37% rated having opportunities to advance as very important.

The women's perceptions about how well these factors were actually provided by their present jobs are reported in Table 2. Younger women rated their jobs lower than did their older female coworkers.

Although it was very important to them, 50% of the women said their jobs actually provided very good use of their abilities. The younger women reported somewhat less often that their abilities were well used on the job. Most women (54%) saw their jobs as actually being valuable to society although the younger women perceived this much less often than the older women. Salaries that the women were receiving were seen to be less adequate by the younger women than by the older women. Opportunities to advance were not being very well provided, according to nearly half the women. This response did not vary by age or position held on the staff.

Do They Feel Discriminated Against?

Seventy-two per cent of the women indicated they had felt discrimination as newspaperwomen. Asked, in an open-ended question, in what ways they were discriminated against, 52% of the women replied: assignments (21%), salary (14%), treatment by coworkers and sources (10%), specific incidents (7%). Findings in the area of assignments, salary, and treatment of newswomen are discussed below.

Assignments and Job Performance

Some comments on the lack of equality in assignments were: "I resent being given a very important news story for city page just because a male reporter isn't available," "I feel that I write as well as any man who has been on our staff and better than a couple of them. Yet they get the first chance of assignments and the more responsible--and personally rewarding--jobs."

Most editors (13) said that they sometimes did take a staffer's sex into consideration when making assignments. Some editors said they send only men on certain stories: sports was mentioned by three editors and stories about police or crime, or stories that were "rough", "hazardous", or "ghastly" were mentioned by seven editors.

Women on the woman's page staffs did not seem to be in the running for certain stories. One women said "I would advise women not to take a women's department job with the idea that they can transfer at will. This rarely works."

Most newspaper editors (18) said that there was no difference in the job performance of men and women on their staffs, and the women agreed. Nearly all the women (92%) said they felt there was no difference in the job performance of men and women staffers. Half of the women who said there was a difference said that women had to work harder to get ahead.

Ten editors said women were better on some stories: human interest (4), stories about women (3), stories in the staffer's area of interest (3). In another question, ten editors said that men were better on some stories: sports (5), government and courts (2), dangerous assignments (1), stories in the staffer's area of interest (2). All editors reported that their women staffers did an "excellent" or "good" job.

The women and their editors disagreed somewhat about protection of women while covering assignments. Eighty-four per cent of the women did not think they should be protected more than men from danger or violence and this was the view of 94% of the younger women. Six of the editors said that they did protect newswomen more than newsmen from danger or violence, 14 said they did not.

Women (80%) tended to disagree with the statement that "in order to succeed in newspaper work, a woman has to act like a man." Those who did agree with the statement saw this either as a hindrance or as a challange. The following comments sum up these attitudes. One young woman on a large paper who agreed with the statement said, "Top women here, position-wise, tend to become 'tough' in attitude toward life. This profession has tended to make them 'harder' than I'd care to become." An older woman agreed with the statement but said, "there is nothing more gratifying than being a successful newsman in a skirt."

Salary

Not all the women felt they were being paid fairly. Two groups expressed this: women working on smaller papers where pay was generally lower felt they were not getting

their share; and younger women, who in general had more years of education, felt they were paid less than were men. In comparing their salaries to those of the men on their staffs, one out of six women said they were being paid less than were men with comparable ability and experience. The younger women said this in 21% of the cases, and older women, in 17% of the cases. (Table 3). On smaller papers, nearly a third (31%) of the women felt they were being paid lower than their male coworkers. (Table 4). Many women did not know the salaries of other staffers and some who reported that their salaries were equal to men's said that the staff was on a published pay scale.

In spite of the women's replies, all of the newspaper editors reported that the women on their staffs were paid the same as the men of equal ability and experience. Furthermore, editors reported unanimously that women were trained the same as men when they joined the staff.

Coworkers

Women said they felt that male coworkers were not treating them on par.

Many women (60%) said they expected some opposition to their careers from male coworkers. When asked if their male coworkers treated them as equals 20% of the women said "no." Of these, most indicated they were treated as less competent or capable and that they were given worse assignments by men.

Here, there were many comments about the woman's page staff being considered less seriously than the news staff. One staffer said "It's a collective type of feeling where most people look down on this department, and, therefore, its writers, as not being capable of good news reporting. It hinders relationships within the newsroom, good, working relationships are difficult."

Sources

Women also found some hindrances in their work from news sources.

While most women (65%) reported that being a woman did not make a difference in working with news sources, other women commented that stereotyping of newswomen occurred outside the newsroom. One such comment: "Some sources become aggressive and abusive until they are put down. Their behavior makes it difficult for a female reporter to do

her job completely or objectively, because her first instinct may be to avoid that news source on later stories. Such behavior certainly mars the professional relationship that should exist."

The general feeling about sources was expressed by this comment: "Some news sources wouldn't bother with a female reporter; many others go out of their way to be nice to her."

Job Satisfaction

When asked what they like about their job, 40 per cent of the women first mentioned "challenging," "stimulating," or "interesting." Twenty-eight per cent mentioned first "the autonomy."

In general, newspaperwomen were satisfied with their jobs. Eighty-four per cent said they were satisfied. Twenty-one per cent of the women 25 years or younger, however, said they were dissatisfied.

Some reasons for a fifth of the women who were just starting their careers to say they were dissatisfied with their jobs may be in their outlook toward the future. What do they expect, what do they hope for?

Occupational Expectations

Table 6 shows that job aspirations of newspaperwomen were not high. Most were, and wanted to remain, reporters. Twenty per cent wanted to be news editors, many of the woman's page reporters aspired to be woman's page editor. None of the women with higher positions wanted to be a reporter and more of these wanted to be managing editor or publisher than did other staffers. An overall 19% of the women looked toward being editor or publisher.

Chances for Changes

Women saw their job situations as worse than men's in terms of getting into a management position or being promoted at all.

Table 7 shows the women's comparisons of men's and women's chances of equal treatment on six job aspects.

Chances of attaining a management position was regarded as worse for women than for men by 74% of all women respondents, regardless of age.

More than a fifth of the women saw their chances of getting a raise as less than those for men, over half saw their chances of being promoted as worse than for men. This was the case for women regardless of age. Most women said their needs and suggestions had an equal chance of being considered by management, although a fourth said they did not.

Only in hiring did some women (17%) feel that they were better off than men. Twenty-one of the 22 editors said, however, that being a woman neither helps nor hinders a person being hired.

DISCUSSION

In discussing newspaperwomen, the situation in Wisconsin does not necessarily correspond to the country as a whole. The newspapers in this Wisconsin survey ranged from the large and prestigious Milwaukee Journal (and Milwaukee Sentinel) to small dailies like the Antigo Journal with a circulation of 5,800. Thus both large metropolitan dailies were represented as were small daily newspapers. While it may be that the combination of a large, widely-influencial paper and a majority of papers of more local outlook is typical of many areas in the country, this is not known.

The average ratio of men to women on the staff, reported by the editors in this sample, was 2.8 men to each woman; comparable ratios from other states or areas of the country were not available.

The sample here did, however, compare closely to the newspaper situation in Wisconsin according to size. From the original conversations with all 35 editors of daily newspapers in the state, it was established that 34% of the newspaperwomen working for daily papers were employed by small (up to 35,000 circulation) papers,

35%, for medium (35,001 to 100,000 circulation), 31% for large (over 100,000 circulation). These figures compare favorably to those of the sample: newspaperwomen on small papers, 40%, on medium, 32%, on large, 28%.

Although none of the data indicate a critical problem for women in the newsroom, some areas seem to require attention.

Most editors said they were satisfied with the performance of the women on their staffs, and most women expressed satisfaction with their jobs. Some women commented that the situation has changed in the recent past. "Ten years ago it was difficult to get a job in the city room," one woman reported; another said "the attitude towards women has changed drastically here in the past 5 or 6 years..." Another: "Attitudes toward women have changed considerably in the last year or two. It's very good now."

The situations and expectations reported by these women were not, however, one of equality with men. Day-to-day grievances seem to be in the area of salary and assignments. Perhaps younger women were not taking lack of experience into account, but many felt they were not being paid equally. Many women felt they did not have an equal chance with men of getting a raise. Overall, enough women said their pay was lower than men's to suggest a problem since all the editors said that women were being paid equally. The problem may be that women were not underpaid but that they thought they were. In either case, more understanding between staff and management seems to be required. Assignments seem to have been made, sometimes, along stereotypic lines: women were never assigned police or crime stories on some papers, but on others, the police or crime beat belonged to a woman. "Assignments" was mentioned most often by women when asked in what areas they were discriminated against. Without opportunities to write important news stories women are being deprived of a basis for evaluation by their superiors, and are being deprived of many of the rewards of newspaper journalism.

Management and editorships seem to be male bastions still. Few women did any administrative or supervisory work. No women were in top management positions, and

few felt they had even an equal chance of attaining these positions. In all, many women felt their job did not provide opportunities to advance.

Affirmative action is needed from employers to be sure that women are given opportunities in all phases of news reporting and management.

Affirmative action is also needed from the women and those who educate them. Women may be ambivalent about "moving up" on the job. They did not here have high aspirations but they had few models either. One woman said: "I feel women should get into high positions yet I have no desire myself to get into the hassles of management. I wonder if my ambition is a product of my role upbringing and how many other women feel this conflict or guilt."

In their traditional place, on the woman's staff, many women did express a desire to be editors. In the newsroom, however, women had less expressed desire to be editor. Perhaps the possibility for their attaining higher status in the newsroom did not occur or appeal to them, or perhaps the probability of their ever attaining a high position seemed overwhelmingly against them.

Comparative studies of men and women on newspaper staffs would be of further help in assessing the situation in the newsrooms.

One woman expressed the feeling that "the reporting field needs women. Women should be encouraged to convince editors they're needed." One woman said, "with incentive, it's a great profession." Ambition and career goals are needed by the women.

"More liberal and progressive thinking and more consciousness-raising," was asked for of management and coworkers.

Table 1

Duties Performed and Liked by Newspaperwomen

Duty		Per Cent Performing Duty	Per Cent of Those Performing Duty Who Liked Duty
General Features		68%	90%
General Reporting		67%	89%
Copy Editing		64%	74%
Headline Writing		62%	65%
General News Involving Women		58%	81%
Features About Women		58%	77%
Rewrites		53%	39%
Consumer Interest Stories		48%	75%
Obits		33%	37%
Foods Reporting		30%	59%
Fashion Reporting		20%	57%
Newsphotography		24%	81%
Columnist		19%	85%
Administrative/Supervisory		18%	84%
Sports		16%	71%
Clerical Work		14%	13%
Wire Desk		13%	86%
Beat Reporting:	education	24%	67%
	arts	23%	78%
	government	21%	81%
	police	19%	63%
	religion	16%	75%
	environment	6%	67%
	farm	3%	67%
	other	17%	94%

N = 107

Table 2

Perceived Provision of Job Rewards
According to Age of Newspaperwomen

		to 25 yrs.	25+ to 39 yrs.	39+ yrs.	Total
Salary	very	27%	34%	58%	40%
	fairly	52	60	39	50
	not	21	6%	3	10
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Use of Abilities	very	45%	61%	59%	56%
	fairly	45	33	41	39
	not	10	6	0	5
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Opportunity to Advance	very	22%	27%	23%	24%
	fairly	34	24	31	30
	not	44	49	46	46
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Value to Society	very	34%	56%	72%	54%
	fairly	66	39	25	43
	not	0	5	3	3
		100%	100%	100%	100%
	N =	32	35	33	100

Table 3

Perceived Relative Pay Compared to
Men on the Staff According to Age of Newspaperwomen

	to 25 yrs.	25+ to 39 yrs.	39+ yrs.	Total
higher	6%	3%	6%	5%
lower	21	13	17	16
same	46	41	31	39
don't know	27	43	46	40
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N =	33	37	35	105

Table 4

Perceived Relative Pay Compared to Men on the Staff According to Size of Newspaper Circulation

	Circulation Size			
	Small	Medium	Large	Total
Higher	3 %	6%	6%	5%
lower	31	8	10	16
same	22	43	31	39
don't know	44	43	31	40
	100	100	100	100
N =	36	37	32	105

Table 5

Agreement/Disagreement with Four Statements About Job Conditions According to Age of Newspaperwomen

		to 25 yrs.	25+ to 39 yrs.	39 yrs.	Total
"In order to succeed in newspaper work, a woman has to act like a man."	agree	22%	6%	17%	15%
	disagree	72	88	80	80
	no opinion	6	6	3	5
		100%	100%	100%	100%
"A woman in newspaper work is likely to encounter some opposition to her career from her male coworkers."	agree	76%	59%	45%	60%
	disagree	24	38	49	37
	no opinion	0	3	6	3
		100%	100%	100%	100%
"Newswomen should be protected more than newsmen from danger or violence while covering news events."	agree	0%	3%	11%	5%
	disagree	94	89	69	84
	no opinion	6	8	20	11
		100%	100%	100%	100%
"I have never felt discrimination while working for a newspaper."	agree	15%	25%	37%	26%
	disagree	85	72	60	72
	no opinion	0	3	3	2
		100%	100%	100%	100%
	N =	33	36	35	104

Table 6

Highest Position Aspired to By
Newswomen in Various Staff Positions

		Current Position on Staff			
		News	Women's Page	Copy Editor or Above	Total
Highest Position	Reporter	55%	22%	0%	35%
	News Editor	20	22	67	27
	Women's Page Editor	0	44	0	16
	Managing Editor or Publisher	21	13	27	19
	No Idea	4	0	6	3
		100%	101%	100%	100%
	N =	52	33	15	100

Table 7

Perceived Chances Compared to Men's Chances on Six Job Aspects, According to Age of Newswomen

Chances of:		to 25 yrs.	25+ to 39 yrs.	39+ yrs.	Total
Being Hired	Better	21%	11%	18%	17%
	Same	59	66	56	60
	Worse	21	23	26	23
		101%	100%	100%	100%
Being Promoted	Better	3%	3%	6%	4%
	Same	39	36	43	39
	Worse	58	61	51	57
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Getting a Raise	Better	3%	0%	9%	4%
	Same	71	72	76	73
	Worse	26	28	15	23
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Getting a Management Position	Better	3%	0%	3%	2%
	Same	26	22	24	24
	Worse	71	78	73	74
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Getting Important Assignments	Better	0%	3%	6%	3%
	Same	55	55	45	52
	Worse	45	42	49	45
		100%	100%	100%	100%
Having Suggestions Considered	Better	0%	3%	6%	3%
	Same	79	69	68	72
	Worse	21	29	26	25
		100%	101%	100%	100%
	N =	34	36	33	103

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